CE 9005 The Five-Minute Documentary
Fall 2011
10 Thursdays, 7 - 10 PM, Oct 6 - Dec 15
Instructor: Laura Deutch, ldeutch@uarts.edu

Course Description
This course teaches the skills necessary to bring an idea to life through moving image and sound. Focusing on the documentary form, the class will introduce students to all stages of preproduction, production and postproduction. This class will introduce the basics concepts and skills of storyboarding, camera operation, composition, lighting, sound recording and editing techniques. Through in-class screenings, discussions, assigned exercises, and a final project, this course will encourage students to explore the fundamentals of visual storytelling and experiment with the nonfiction form.

Please note: Access to a basic video camera is required. All production and most editing will take place outside of class.

Course Assessment/Criteria for evaluation
- Students produce short exercises and videos, which demonstrate their understanding of technical production skills.
- Students demonstrate the ability to translate their story ideas into a video with a clear purpose and theme.
- Students produce work in which the visual and sounds elements contribute to the delivery of the main idea.
- Students are able to talk about the media that they view and make and are able to explain and support the story structure, style, themes and edit decisions, and how those enhance the story and the message.
- Students contribute to the critical evaluation and constructive criticism of their classmates, while learning to receive feedback and experiment with new ideas.

Suggested text(s)
- *Directing the Documentary* by Michael Rabinger ($20 on Amazon)
- *Visual storytelling* from the Center for Documentary Studies (free download)

Week 1: History and Future of Documentary
- *Description of Section Objectives:* Understand the basic threads of documentary history and practice. Understand course objectives and clarify expectations.
- Present an overview of documentary practice and different modes of production.
- *Screening:* Selection of clips and shorts- discuss form, audience, intent, idea
- Small group exercise to discuss ideas, expectations for the class.
- Overview of equipment and facilities.
- *Assignment:* Create a one-minute introductory video.

Week 2: Film language
- *Description of Section Objectives:* Students understand the different camera movements and can make decisions about how composition and camera placement can build a visual story.
- *Presentation/Discussion:* camera framing, movement, composition
- *In class exercise:* shot types, short shooting exercise; explore a space; shot identification
- *Assignment:* Create a 2-minute portrait of a place.
Week 3: Interview techniques/ Sound recording
- Description of Section Objectives: Students are introduced to the basics of sound recording, and learn how to prepare and execute an interview for the camera.
- Presentation/Discussion: Interview techniques. How to choose and operate sound equipment, select a microphone and prepare the recording environment.
- Introduction to using Fair Use media (audio)
- Screening: Interview clips focusing on mis-en-scene
- Exercise: Practice interviews and sound recording
- Assignment: Create 2 sound tracks for your portrait video.

Week 4: Developing and structuring story ideas through writing and editing. (Intro to editing)
- Description of Section Objectives: Develop the process of finding a story and structuring an idea. Students learn the basics of video editing.
- Presentation/Discussion: Deciding on a concept, developing a ‘working hypothesis.’
- What is the Story?
- What is the Conflict/Driving force?
- What is the Message/Idea/Theme?
- Who is the Audience?
- What are the Aesthetic choices made by the filmmaker?
- Exercise: Identify these aspects in short examples screened in class.
- Assignment: Conduct an interview

Week 5: Preproduction/Planning with editing in mind
- Description of Section Objectives: Student develop their story ideas in order to understand basic ideas of story development and structure in preparation for filming.
- Students learn more advanced editing techniques (Elements of Sound and text; transcription and workflow)
- Presentation/Discussion: Different ways to prepare a script. Preparing a shot list and storyboard. Organizing and structuring a scene (traditional story arc). Planning for B-Roll
- Exercise: Paper editing exercise; Shooting a scene/event (with shot list and storyboard in mind)
- Assignment: Film a process. Plan your final project pitch.

Week 6: Production Pitch
- Description of Section Objectives: Students will learn how to prepare for a shoot and work as a team to oversee their production. Students will learn how to work with Public Domain and Fair Use video.
- Presentation/Discussion: Ethical and Legal Issues; Preparing for a shoot; Lighting; remix, archival examples. Working with found footage and Creative Commons media.
- Assignment: Film/gather materials for a trailer

Week 7: In class editing
- Description of Section Objectives: Students learn the basic conventions for creating a short trailer/informational video about their project.
- Screening: clips TBD
- Exercise: Start to log and capture footage. Create a short edited piece with your footage.
- Assignment: Work on your final project

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Week 8: Evaluating rough cuts
- Description of Section Objectives: Students evaluate their footage and start to assemble sequences. Students work with text and sound to enhance their projects.
- Presentation/Discussion: Editing techniques.
- Screening: works in progress screening
- Exercise: Integrating outside material; experimenting with different editing techniques.

Week 9: Post Production
- Description of Section Objectives: Students refine their rough cut into a finished project.
- Presentation/Discussion: Post-production techniques
- Screening: works in progress screening
- Exercise: Adding titles and music to your video

Week 10: Finishing your project; Distribution; Final screening
- Description of Section Objectives: Students learn how to prepare their final projects for distribution.
- Presentation/Discussion: Strategies for online distribution; brief overview of documentary opportunities
- Screening: Final class screening and critique
- Exercise: How to prepare your project for Web, DVD

All students are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly, and for the duration of the scheduled instructional time.

Individual instructors will decide the optimum time for taking attendance and may penalize for habitual lateness or absence.

Repeated absences may result in a grade of “F” for the course. Students who withdraw from a course must do so in writing. Nonattendance does not constitute an official withdrawal.

The University of the Arts reserves the right to cancel classes due to low enrollment, reschedule any course or to change the instructor. If a cancellation should occur, students will be notified prior to the start of classes and will have the option of taking another course or receiving a full refund. The University is not responsible for supplies that may be purchased in advance.